

A Report to the 46th District

Representative
**Phyllis
Gutiérrez
Kenney**



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Representative Phyllis Gutiérrez-Kenney

46th Legislative District

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Appropriations

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Dear Neighbors,

I hope you had a happy and safe holiday season. We are now in the 2006 session in Olympia. This newsletter is designed to provide you with a short briefing on what is happening under the capitol dome. As your representative, I am committed to bringing out the best in our district and resolving problems for the long-term.

My priorities are defined by my vision of a a stronger, more promising future for all Washingtonians. House Democrats work hard to reach that goal. Along with addressing issues such as affordable housing, sound environmental policy, and transportation, we're constantly working so that:

- children of any background, in any part of the state, have access to the best education in America;
- our colleges and universities have ample room for everyone to get a degree;
- our businesses –large and small- create family-wage jobs that include benefits; and
- our health care system focuses more on family, especially children and seniors.

The Legislature voted on important reforms in 2005 that affect all of us. I'm including details inside this newsletter.

Your insight is invaluable; every time you share your concerns and your ideas with me, you help me serve you better. Let's keep this dialogue going, it's made an important difference in our district.

Sincerely,

Representative Phyllis Gutiérrez-Kenney



The federal Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Plan went into effect on January 1st. But you can enroll until May 15, 2006. If you need help choosing a plan, or have questions regarding this program, please call the State Insurance Commissioner's SHIBA line: 1(800) 562-6900

A Report to the 46th District

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LOOKING AHEAD:

Economic growth

This fall Washington employers added 11,700 new jobs and the number of unemployed people fell by 7,900 compared to last year. We need to keep the economy moving in this direction.

As you know, the state's revenue is up by \$304 million. This is good news, but we need to remember that much of the increased revenue is from housing and construction markets, which may cool.

2006 is the second year of the budget cycle, so we need to be very careful as to where and how we make new investments in the supplemental budget. And we must also make sure we have sufficient reserves, in case we need them down the road.

I am sure we can reach a balance that keeps our economy strong and meets the needs of Washington's people.

The WASL

Parents and students are worried about passing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, which will be a graduation requirement starting in 2008. We need to look at reforms so kids that don't test well can pass this test. I support Gov. Gregoire's plan to give our local school districts money for summer school, intensive tutoring, and other focused learning opportunities for students who need help.

We will work on approving "alternative assessments" – that is, other ways for students to show they have the reading, writing and math skills tested in the WASL. One alternative will be a collection of student work; another will be a calculation of grades and WASL scores. These alternatives will be a big help for kids who just don't test well.

We want to do all we can to help every student meet the academic standards we have set. In today's economy students need higher levels of skill and knowledge. But we will be watching this issue closely to make sure that the WASL is fair, that all students have equal opportunities to learn, and that in 2008, every parent of a studious high school senior can attend a graduation ceremony.

More Science and Math teachers

Washington doesn't have enough qualified Math and Science teachers. To solve the problem, I will introduce the "Washington Teach Math-Science Program", which will encourage more people to consider teaching careers in these areas. The goal is not only to increase the number of Math and Science teachers, but also to improve the quality of those teachers.

Medical Malpractice

Now that voters rejected both medical malpractice initiatives, the 2006 Legislature will work on developing legislation regarding insurance reform, patient safety and civil justice reform.



46th Legislative District

THE 2005 SESSION:

New schools

I voted for a construction budget for K-12, that was one of the best in over twenty years. We're spending more than \$600 million to build schools. That means more new schools and lower property taxes for citizens.

Making room for future professionals

Our colleges and universities need to create access and be prepared when the largest class of high school seniors graduates a couple of years from now. That's why we passed sensible legislation aimed at improving and expanding our state's colleges and universities, as well as allocating more funds for financial aid.

I voted for a construction budget that spends almost \$1 billion to build more lecture halls and laboratories. I also voted for a budget that invests \$72.6 million to open up about 8,000 more spots for college students throughout the state.

On top of that, we passed strong reforms that:

- expand two UW branch campuses so that they can admit freshmen and sophomores by offering lower division classes;
- expand programs for transfer and graduate students;
- allow four community colleges to offer applied BA degrees;
- expand the eligibility for state need grants to students enrolled for as few as four credits, instead of six;

Local construction projects in the 2005-2007 Capital Budget

Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services \$400,000
Seattle - 10718 35th Avenue NE Sediment Pond \$1,832,600

Department of Ecology

Seattle Public Utilities: Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel \$7,134,656
Seattle Public Utilities: Urban Runoff Treatment \$1,034,000

Community/Technical College System

North Seattle Community College: Employment Resource Center \$600,000
North Seattle Community College: Wellness Center Repairs \$3,000,000

Total 46th Legislative District **\$14,001,256**

- produce more college graduates in high-demand, high-pay fields like computer science, engineering and health care;
- provide more financial aid: almost \$70 million in new funds for the State Need Grant.

Technology transfer

I sponsored a bill that turns university discoveries and inventions into products that benefit the public and strengthen the state's economy. The transfer of technology encourages the partnerships between our higher education institutions, and provides students opportunities to be part of cutting edge discoveries. This new law is good for our researchers, students and business, and the bottom line is that it will create new jobs.

Transportation

How much longer do you think the Alaskan Way Viaduct will hold? It is a major artery to the Port of Seattle that carries more than 103,000 vehicles every day. Its structural damage is a serious safety and

economic concern, especially since we live in a seismic area. We have to replace this crumbling structure in order to save lives and protect our economic base.

So we got together with stakeholders and crafted a bi-partisan package that addresses transportation needs throughout the entire state, focusing mainly on improving safety, freight mobility and capacity on roadways.

Think about it, thousands more people every year are calling the Evergreen State their home. So thousands more people are out on our roads, streets, highways, and bridges. We cannot ignore the need for improvements any longer.

The new transportation budget includes a slight hike in the gas tax, which was upheld by voters in November. This additional revenue will pay for the safety and mobility projects needed on our roads and highways such as guardrails, passing lanes, intersection illumination, interchange upgrades, and new on-ramps for particularly dangerous stretches of highway around our state.



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Health Care

In the 2005 session we passed a number of health care reforms, including:

Coverage for every kid – I believe every child should be able to see a doctor. Period, end of story. But currently there are over 67,000 children in Washington State without health insurance. Providing health care to kids is not only the compassionate thing to do, it's the smart thing, because it's less expensive to give kids shots and regular doctor visits than let problems fester and have kids show up in the ER, the most expensive place to receive health care. We passed a reform that aims to cover every child in our state by the year 2011.

More affordable prescription drugs – To get the most for your tax dollars, the state uses its giant purchasing power to get us the best price. We do it for copying paper, staples, everything. But not prescription drugs, even though

taxpayers buy \$1 billion in prescription medicine a year. I voted for a reform to save your money by shopping smart and negotiating better prices.

Medicine from Canada – Americans pay the highest prices in the world for medicines. Seniors and working people are cutting their pills in half or not taking them at all. These are medicines their doctors say they need in order to stay healthy and alive. We passed a reform to safely buy medicines for Canada.

Mental-health parity - We approved legislation requiring that insurance policies cover mental-health treatment the same as other health services that are covered. This is the right thing to do for folks in need. Frankly, it's the right thing to do from a fiscal perspective as well, because people who have mental-health issues can cost society a great deal in terms of lost work hours and public-safety concerns.